

TULA
Hidalgo

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

At the start of the seventh century, the Toltecs founded Tula, whose urban development lasted more than four centuries. According to later written sources, it was founded by ***Ce Acatl Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl*** *in about AD 900. It reached its maximum dimensions between AD 1100–1150, with an extension of 16 km² and a population of between 60,000 and 80,000 people. Sometime between AD 1150 and 1200, much of the city was set ablaze and abandoned, the monumental buildings were looted, and many of the sculptures were buried in the pyramidal mounds.*





PLACE NAME	Tollan Xicocotitlan ("Place of Tules [Bulrushes]")
CULTURE	Toltec
PERIOD	Early Postclassic
DATES	AD 1100–1150

HOW TO GET THERE

It is in southeast Hidalgo, in the municipality of Tula de Allende, 80 km away from the city of Pachuca. To get there, take the México-Laredo Highway; when you reach Actopan, the state highway to Tula begins. From Mexico City, it can be reached via the México-Querétaro superhighway, at Km 60 take the turnoff to "Refinería" to reach the site.

ADMISSION

According to the Federal Fees Act, admission is free for children under 13, students and teachers with a valid ID, seniors, retirees, pensioners, and INAH personnel and researchers.

HOURS

Monday to Sunday from 9 am to 5 pm.
Archaeological Zone telephone: 01 (773) 100 3654.

PHOTOGRAPHY

For the use of any device to make videos, visitors must pay the fee stipulated by the Ministry of Public Finance. Non-professional photography, without the use of tripods, is free of charge.

SERVICES

Museum, parking lot, and the sale of folk art.

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TEXTS
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GOBIERNO DE MÉXICO | CULTURA SECRETARÍA DE CULTURA | INAH 1939·2019



GET READY TO EXPLORE

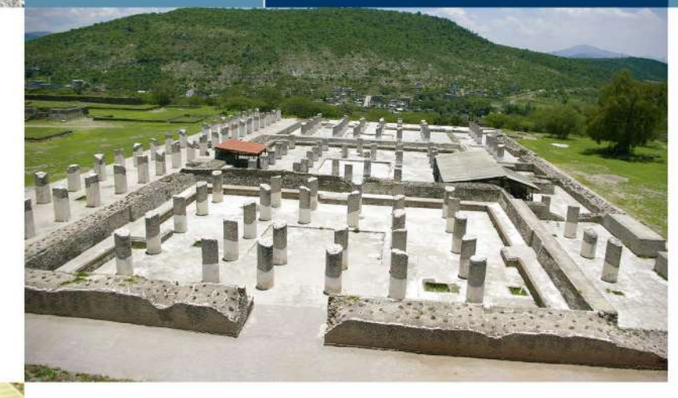
Ballcourt 1

It is north of Pyramid B. Known as the *tlachtli*, the ballcourt was used for ritual confrontations, which consisted of a ballgame between two teams that sought to strike a round marker (*tlachtemalacatl*) in the central part of the vertical walls with a rubber ball.

Coatepantli (Serpent Wall)

It stands behind Pyramid B and was regarded as a sacred space that marked a separation between the main precinct and the North Plaza. It was a wall that had a central frieze with bas-reliefs representing a partially skeletal individual overlapping a serpent, while on the upper part shell-shaped stepped frets were motifs alluding to the planet Venus, associated with the god Quetzalcoatl.





Burnt Palace

Standing west of Pyramid B, it was named the Burnt Palace because it was destroyed by a fire. It is a complex of spaces composed of rooms, spacious halls, and vestibules. Apparently this enclosure was a ritual space where private Toltec religious ceremonies were held. A Chac Mool sculpture, a turquoise disk, and a spectacular shell cuirass were found in Hall 2.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH

In 1873 Antonio García Cubas published "Ruinas de la antigua Tollan" in the *Boletín de la Sociedad Mexicana de Geografía y Estadística*. By 1880 the French traveler, Désiré Charnay (1828–1915) reached Tula, where he explored the "Toltec Palace" and other buildings. He was the first scholar to see similarities between this site and Chichén Itzá. Beginning in 1940, the city was excavated by Jorge R. Acosta, who was sent by the Head of Pre-Hispanic Monuments. For almost twenty years, he conducted archaeological explorations, consolidation, and restoration of buildings that today can be visited in the Archaeological Site: Pyramid B, the Hall of Columns, Coatepantli (Serpent Wall), Ballcourt 1, Pyramid C, Ballcourt 2, Central Altar, the Corral Building, and the Burnt Palace. He discovered the Atlantean Figures, carved pillars and pilasters. From 1968 to 1970 Eduardo Matos Moctezuma excavated and restored two major structures: Ballcourt 2 and a small rectangular platform identified as a Tzompantli (Skull Wall). From 1992 to 1994 during a maintenance project directed by Guadalupe Mastache and Robert H. Cobean, they discovered the Tula Cuirass, which was made of shell, and they conducted conservation work. In 2003 diverse aspects such as iconography, religion, chronology, conservation of monuments, and colonial-period studies were addressed in the project "Research, Conservation, and Maintenance of the Archaeological Site of Tula." From 2005 to the present, they have made contributions to knowledge of research and conservation of the city's archaeological monuments.

Pyramid B

It was one of the city's foremost sacred buildings, probably serving as a royal sanctuary with access limited to the ruler and his leading priests. It might have been dedicated to the veneration of royalty and Tula's ruling dynasties, whose portraits are depicted in the relief on the pilasters, as well as warfare, a key institution of the Toltec state. The construction was originally covered with slabs carved with jaguars, coyotes, vultures, and eagles devouring human hearts, alternating with depictions of an entity combining human, bird, and reptile characteristics. These elements were discovered on all four sides of its tiers.



The Atlantean Figures

They were discovered in the interior of Pyramid B. These are architectural elements in the form of human figures supporting the temple roof. Each sculpture has four sections that were assembled mortise-and-tenon. They depict Toltec warriors, whose insignia includes mosaics, feather headgear, and butterfly pectorals, and weapons such as obsidian knives, spearthrowers, and arrows. Based on traces of paint on their surface (red lines perpendicular to the sculpture), they might represent the great Toltec-Chichimec Warrior, Mixcoatl, father of Quetzalcoatl, the latter representative of the Morning Star, Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli.





ESSENTIALS:

- A *Ballcourt 1*
- B *Coatepantli (Serpent Wall)*
- C *Burnt Palace*
- D *Pyramid B*
- E *Pyramid C*
- F *The Pilasters*
- G *The Shrine*
- H *The Tzompantli (Skull Wall)*
- I *Ballcourt 2*
- J *Building J*
- K *Building K*

The Pilasters

Carved in bas-relief, they represent prominent human figures accompanied by symbols alluding to rulership and tied to warfare and sacrifice. The columns decorated with feathered serpents stood at the entrance.

The Shrine

Located in the central plaza, it was excavated by Désiré Charnay in 1880–1882. He discovered a burial, stairs, and a Chac Mool fragment.

The Tzompantli (Skull Wall)

West of the plaza and parallel to Ballcourt 2, it served as a skull altar related to human sacrifice and warfare. In the excavations remains of human skulls and a stone box with bifacial sacrificial knives were found. The skulls of sacrificial victims were placed on a wood scaffolding on this structure to honor the city's gods.





Ballcourt 2

Located to one side of the Tzompantli at the west end of the plaza of Tula Grande. As for its shape, orientation, and dimensions, it is similar to that of Chichén Itzá, Yucatán. The inner sloped walls had a ballgame ring that served as a marker.

